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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/ERA AND EUR/NB, PRAGUE FOR HYATT

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SUBJECT: FINLAND: VIEWS ON THE DECEMBER 13-14 GAERC

REF: STATE 258831

Classified By: POL Chief John Hall for reasons 1.5(B) and (D)

1. (U) We met with Finnish MFA EU Correspondent Kimmo Lahdevirta to discuss the agenda for next week's GAERC meeting and the European Council meeting to follow. Finnish views, by issue:

2. (C) China Arms Embargo: Lahdevirta said his understanding is that the EU has reached consensus on revisions to the Code of Conduct, except for two issues: a difference of views regarding the primacy of national law in some cases, and whether to make the Code legally binding. He opined that the first issue ought to be resolved fairly easily, but the second is much more difficult and may have to be carried over into Luxembourg's presidency. Finland strongly favors making the Code legally binding, he said, but "a whole host of others" are opposed. The GoF, Lahdevirta added, has not wanted to link lifting of the embargo with completion of work on the Code of Conduct. We said this did not seem logical -- if the Finns want a legally binding Code of Conduct, one would think that the best tactic to get it would be to insist on the embargo staying in place until their demand is met.

3. (C) Ukraine: Lahdevirta agreed that the EU and the U.S. are on the same wavelength regarding the election and post-election developments. He remarked that the demonstrations in Kiev clearly show strong pro-change, pro-modernization sentiments, but do not necessarily show a pro-Western feeling. In any case, he said, the Finns are pleased and relieved that so far there has been no bloodshed, and feel it is "important to emphasize the integrity of Ukraine against any secession." The GoF wonders if enough time remains to complete the technical arrangements for a new vote on December 26, but if the vote is held, it is important that Western nations field as many observers as possible. Finland is considering on a national basis whether it can increase its own contribution.

4. (C) Middle East: Lahdevirta did not see any difference between EU views and the U.S. position of reftel. In particular, he agreed that the Palestinian Authority must be headed by a legitimate leadership, and must show that it can work. It is also important that Israel and the Palestinians cooperate on planning for Gaza withdrawal, "so that no vacuum develops between them."

5. (C) Iran: Lahdevirta said he expected the GAERC to reassert the necessity for Iran to stick to its commitments -- and for the international community to be given the opportunity to verify that. Iran must understand that without such verification, there is no possibility of anything happening on the "carrot" side. He said it seems it will take quite some time before things change for the better in Iranian society -- although on the other hand, events in Ukraine show that change can happen rapidly.

6. (C) Turkey: Lahdevirta said the Finns expect Turkey and Croatia to be the most sensitive issues at the European Council meeting. The Finns are cautiously optimistic that the Council will agree to begin accession talks for Turkey, although the date remains up in the air. In any case, the firm GoF view is that the question before the EU is negotiation on full Turkish membership, not on some lesser status. Lahdevirta remarked that a Turkish indication of willingness to recognize Cyprus would obviously be an important step that would certainly help "pave the way."

7. (C) Croatia: Drawing on reftel points, we stressed the need to keep the pressure on Croatia to cooperate with the ICTY. The Finns expect that the idea of agreeing to set a date for negotiations, but making it conditional on cooperation with ICTY, will be acceptable to a majority of EU nations -- but perhaps not all.

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